

**Annual EMS Awards Banquet
November 4, 2011**

Good evening. On behalf of Governor Chris Christie, I want to thank you for all your hard work every day for the residents of our state. The Governor couldn't be here this evening, but I do want to share a message from him.

Governor's letter

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the State of New Jersey, we are pleased to welcome all those gathered for the annual Emergency Medical Services Awards Dinner.

Our Administration is proud to recognize the dedicated work of our EMS workers throughout the State who ensure the health and safety of our residents. I applaud the EMS for Children Program on their 19 years of service in advancing the quality of healthcare in New Jersey. Tonight's event provides an opportune forum for exemplary EMS workers and heroic residents to be honored by the Office of Emergency Medical Services, their colleagues, family members and friends. I join all those gathered in commending tonight's honorees and thanking them for their service.

Best wishes to all for an enjoyable evening.

Sincerely,

Governor Chris Christie and Lt. Gov Kim Guadagno

I hope you are all enjoying your time at the statewide Emergency Medical Services Conference. I would like to thank Assistant Commissioner Christopher Rinn and EMS Director Karen Halupke and their staff for putting together an extensive and informative conference.

You have an ambitious and diverse array of 60 education sessions from airway management to surviving a hostage crisis presented by a broad collection of educators and experts.

The amount of information and education that is being shared over these three days will enrich the work of the first-responder community.

It is always important to enhance our skills, to continue our education and to be as prepared as possible to provide the most state-of-the-art emergency medical care to the patients whose lives are in our hands.

I hope today's conference will help you to recharge your batteries and reinvigorate your commitment to providing the highest quality care to the residents of New Jersey—often at the most critical times in their lives.

Tonight, is a special part of the conference—where we take time to celebrate the achievements of the EMS community during the awards ceremony. Tonight, we honor

individuals who have gone above and beyond the call of duty during their daily efforts in the field of Emergency Medical Services.

We also honor several residents who took heroic actions to save the lives of others without regard for their own safety.

The stories of their extraordinary actions are inspiring.

But while we pay special recognition to some, we are really honoring all of you. Every first responder in New Jersey reports to work each day with one goal in mind – to protect the safety and health of those in distress.

This commitment was demonstrated during Hurricane Irene and the extensive flooding that affected our state. It was a historic, hundred-year storm that brought an enormous amount of rain to an already waterlogged state.

As is so often the case, the worst of times bring out the best in people.

And that's certainly true with Hurricane Irene. New Jersey's healthcare professionals worked selflessly and collaboratively to ensure the health and safety of patients, residents and community members.

In New Jersey, EMS professionals worked in unprecedented conditions, assisting in thousands of evacuations and answering scores of 911 calls. EMS squads were on the ground—and in many cases, in the water—to make sure residents could access hospitals.

The response by the state, local and county governments, emergency responders, health care providers, social service agencies and volunteers was truly remarkable—nearly 1.5 million people were evacuated from our barrier islands, thousands of people were sheltered during and after the hurricane and more than 3,500 residents of health care facilities were evacuated.

Last week, more than 1,000 first responders, volunteers, members of the National Guard and police and fire joined Governor Christie at the War Memorial in Trenton for a special gathering to celebrate all the workers and volunteers that contributed to this great effort.

I know many of you were there, but for those who weren't, I want to relay a thank you from the Governor. We both recognize that you left your families behind to care for strangers and when your day ended many of you returned to flooded homes or power outages so thank you again for your selfless service to our residents.

During the ceremony, we also recognized EMT Michael Kenwood, a member of the Princeton First Aid and Rescue Squad who passed away on Aug. 28 from injuries sustained while responding to a water rescue assignment.

His heroic efforts and untimely death remind us of the life and death nature of EMS work.

This evening we will honor EMT Kenwood and five other first responders who died in the line of duty this year. We will remember the sacrifice they made in order to protect the safety of our residents.

We applaud New Jersey's first responders for their stellar response to Hurricane Irene. From the pre-event planning to the brave service while the storm and floods raged, they served their patients and communities exceedingly well.

So often our response efforts are regional and Hurricane Irene was no different. It quickly became clear that additional resources were needed to assist with EMS operations.

Pennsylvania responded with 45 ambulances and 249 EMS workers. I know some of those EMTs are here with us tonight and I want to publicly thank them for answering our call.

Your help greatly expanded New Jersey's capacity to provide additional EMS support to areas most impacted during the hurricane.

Pennsylvania assisted us just as we helped New York City last December.

When the city EMS became overwhelmed with the number of calls for assistance resulting from the post-Christmas blizzard, New Jersey EMS was there to assist with the response while at the same maintaining full EMS coverage in our state throughout the storm and its aftermath.

Whether it is a Christmas blizzard, a hurricane or a freak Halloween snow storm—EMS workers are always ready to answer the call.

EMTs are there when people are most vulnerable. They are there to provide emergency health care but also provide much more—a calming presence and compassionate ear.

The service that you provide to the residents of this state is invaluable.

Much of the health care system is experiencing an evolution and the emergency medical service community is also adapting to ongoing change.

Working together we can meet the challenges facing the EMS community so that all of you can continue the good work you do to strengthen our emergency response system.

Again, I would like to congratulate tonight's honorees and to thank you all for the heroic efforts you perform each and every day to protect the health of New Jersey's residents.